ARALIACEAE

Panax pseudoginseng Wall. [= *Aralia pseudoginseng* (Wall.) Benth. ex C.B. Clarke; *Aralia quinquefolia* Decne. & Planch. var. *pseudoginseng* (Wall.) Burkill; *Panax schinseng* var. *nepalensis* Nees; *Panax sikkimensis* R.N. Banerjee]

Vernacular name: *Hindi* - Jinseng.

Trade names: False Ginseng, Himalayan Ginseng, Indian Ginseng.

Panax pseudoginseng Wall.

Distribution: INDIA: It is reported from Himalayas and N.E. India, especially Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Meghalaya between altitudinal ranges of 2900 – 4000 m; CHINA; TIBET; NEPAL; BHUTAN and MYANMAR.

Habitat: It is found in soils which has deep humus in thick Conifer-Oak and Birch forests of temperate zone. It is also found along slopes of Tista Valley between Zema (3000 m) and Kalep (4000 m) in North Sikkim and in Lachung Valley under Himlock-Acer-Silver Oak community very close to river bed. At Chhangu in East Sikkim, it is sparse and found along the lake margin and the Rani Chhu River.

Population status / Cause for RET: Endangered. Ginseng from the Eastern Himalayas is threatened due to deforestation of habitats, road construction and cultivation.

Description: Perennial herbs with horizontal knotted rootstock, which produces one knot per year. Stem erect, 40 – 80 cm high, terminating in a whorl of leaves. Leaves digitate, usually in whorls at apex of stem; leaflets 5 – 6, narrowly lanceolate, serrate at margins, hairy. Flowers in terminal, unequal, umbellate heads, pale green or orange-yellow. Fruits drupaceous, globose, 3 – 5 mm across, dull green to black.

Fl. & Fr.: May – June / July – October.

Parts used commercially: Rhizome is used in Folk and Modern medicine.

Medicinal properties and uses: The Ginseng (rhizome) is popularly known as the elixir of life and it is extremely popular rejuvenating and revitalising tonic. Further, it is considered as a panacea. It is used to increase longevity, mental agility and to check hypertension. It is also used locally for the treatment of cancer. Orally, it is used as a haemostatic for treating conditions such as vomiting and coughing up of blood, blood in the urine or stool, bleeding nose and haemorrhagic disease. It is used in cases of dyspepsia, palpitation and asthma. It is also used for controlling amnesia, headache and convulsions. It is a very good sex tonic.

Substitutes and adulterants: This plant can be used as a good substitute for *Panax ginseng* May.

Cultivation practices: The germplasm of this plant species is very well maintained in Sikkim State Forest Nursery located at Kyongnosla in East Sikkim. Rhizomes or seeds can be used for propagating this species. It thrives well in medium and light loam soils, which are rich in organic matter. It is a temperate plant and requires freezing temperatures for a minimum of 3 to 4 months. During this period, this plant become dormant. Further, it requires cool summer (temperature not exceeding 30°C) for better growth. The land should be ploughed several times to allow decomposition of organic matter and to avoid soil-borne diseases, pests and weeds. Seeds take about 120 to 130 days for germination. One of the most important factors required for successful cultivation of this plant species is shade. Normally, Ginseng growers do not apply artificial fertilizers, as it is grown mostly in fertile soils, which are rich in organic matter, forest humus and compost. Not much watering is required, as the area remain moist. However, 1 or 2 irrigation in a week is required during summer when there is no rain. Harvesting of rhizomes can be done when the berries ripen. It can be harvested after a minimum of 4 years. September is the best month for harvesting. The rhizomes can be dug out with the help of spade and are washed and dried in an artificial drier at a temperature of 45°C and are stored in a cool dry place.

Commercial / Ex-Im data: It is traded in local, regional, national and global markets.

Legal: Included in Negative List of Exports.

References:

Nayar, M.P. & A.R.K. Sastry (1990). Red Data Book on Indian Plants. Vol. 3, Pp. 28-29.

Selvam, A.B.D. (2012). Pharmacognosy of Negative Listed Plants. Pp. 138-148.